2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

881 On moonlight nights the girls
524 play special games in the courtyard, such as 'Knock, knock, little man'; they put bits of banana leaves in the forks of the fingers and toes and sing: 'Knock, knock, little man; knock, knock, little woman!' Then they spread wide their arms and legs and fingers and toes and knock them together. The leaves that fall out when they do so are collected and hidden some distance away. Then they all separate and hunt for them, singing:

'We look for our fellow the barren one.
I don't know where she is, the barren one.'

When they find the leaves they pile them up and then each snatches one, singing:

'Here she is, here she is!'

Then the game ends.

Another traditional song goes:

'Little mouth, little mouth, She-who-makes-her-friends-quarrel.'

But many of the songs the maids sing with the young men are just current popular songs.

881 'The maids are friends for the bride to amuse herself with. They
883 amuse themselves with young men, singing, and if some other bride is secluded at the same time, they go and compete against her and her maids in singing.' At the seclusion of Mwaihojo's daughter described below, a dozen girls, all a little younger than herself, kept her company. Five were her own half-sisters, one was a wife of her father who had not yet reached puberty, one a daughter of her father's sister, and four were daughters of her father's neighbours.

864 Although a bride's hut is the centre for sex play, women who are
881 sleeping with their husbands and are therefore 'heavy' (nzito) with semen, do not enter it and may not cook for her, for any contact with them is felt to be dangerous to her. Her own mother refrains from intercourse until her daughter has gone to her husband.

881 The bride is not confined to the hut (as among many other African peoples) but is free to move about the immediate neighbourhood. Her movements are, however, limited by the taboo on crossing a stream, the need to avoid sexually active women, and the avoidance of her father and other men of his village, as well as her in-laws. When she leaves her hut she is accompanied by her

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Weller, senior, and turn their children out into the bush to learn whatever the companions they find there have to teach them.

They play at "grown-ups," having their own chiefs and headmen; build houses, pay taxes, learn various useful and many injurious things. Their "chiefs" demand taxes, and there is no pretence about it. A boy must steal, even if it be from his own parents, whatever his chief wants, and pay it to him as tax. More serious thieving is often attempted, and the chief, who is usually the biggest bully of the crowd, will bring to trial and punishment the very boys whom he sent out to steal. Mimic battles are fought in good temper, but they sometimes end in serious injury to some of the warriors. The great achievement which all boys burn to excel in is the high leap, and a thrashing may be the portion of the unlucky one who is weakest. Tricks of many kinds are indulged in, one of the favourites being to send a mere child off on some errand, and on his return direct him to sit in a place where a fire has been kindled, and the ashes removed in his absence; or he is ordered to sit where thorns have been placed for him. No boy dares to disobey such orders.

Mimicry is a favourite amusement. I have seen remarkably good imitations of motor-bicycles made by quite small boys, even the "phut-phut" being reproduced by another boy running along with a bent reed touching the ground. Lanterns are made out of pumpkins, as boys at home make turnip lanterns. Hats and shoes are fashioned out of leaves, and tiny

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canoes of maize leaves are sent floating down stream, with shouting and racing competition between the owners.

Girls help their mothers, and at a very early age look after their younger brothers or sisters. It is a common sight to see a small girl staggering along under weight of a fat baby brother strapped to her back.

In the hotter regions boys go naked till ten or twelve, wearing nothing but a piece of string on the waist and a charm on neck or wrist. Girls begin to wear bark-cloth waistbands at five or six, adding more as circumstances permit. Their clothing is provided by the father; but boys, at whatever age they begin to wear any kind of garment, have to earn it for themselves, for it is not the business of their fathers to clothe them. They often, however, get a fowl or two, or even a goat or a sheep, from a grandparent, with the proceeds of which they buy a yard or two of cloth.

In the great majority of families there is a cruel difference in the treatment of boys and girls. The boys are uncared for, dirty, unoiled, not too well fed; while the girls are kept clean and oiled, well fed, and as far as possible clothed at an early age. The reason is not far to seek. Girls are a source of wealth, and a dirty, ill-cared-for girl will command few head of cattle when the time comes to think of her marriage. Boys, on the other hand, have value only as representatives of the family when the father has passed to the spirit world, and that value is not dependent on external circumstances. A change is being effected,

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ceremonies begin; indeed, the one passes into the other. Girls are sometimes betrothed before birth, but this is usually done only when a wife has died, and the father, being obliged to supply another, offers the widower the next child to be born if it is a girl. He sends a boy to the man as a guarantee of good faith, but the boy remains only a week or so, and then returns to his home.

It may be accepted as certain that no boy comes through the dangers of adolescence unharmed. Fathers are said to warn their growing sons about these dangers, and sometimes they threaten to refuse to find wives for them if the warning goes unheeded; but nothing more is done, and the threat is never carried out.

Children's games are much too numerous for anything but a mere reference. For quiet moments, puzzles; or guessing what is in the hand of another; or what object, out of sight, is being touched. A favourite river- or lake-side sport is diving and staying under water while some one counts. Walking on the hands or on stilts is very popular.

Tangilo is a ball game, with sides, the ball being thrown from one to another on the same side, while the other side endeavours to get and keep it a given number of throws, without letting it fall to the ground or into the hands of the opponents. *Jegubo* is a game not unlike our hockey, a ball being struck about, and kept as far as possible within one's own side. *Ngulya* is played with sides sitting at a distance from a small object set up in the middle, while any round thing is thrown at it from side to side, the winning side

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being the one that hits the object a given number of times in succession. 526

Ingarama, the lion, is a piece of banana cord attached to a string and whirled round the head, when it makes a noise remotely resembling the growling of a lion. *Ifula*, rain, is our bull-roarer; old people still believe that it stops the rain; but even they admit that no well-disposed spirit takes any notice of child's play. *Banda* is a kind of top, spun by twirling it between the palms and letting it go. Whip-tops are in use, but are of European origin. A kind of mimic ammunition is supplied by the seeds of the *unyunguti* tree, which are thrown at the enemy, and all who are hit are "killed," and carried off the field. 524 [177]

Konde children are perfectly happy. Those who go to school hail the dismissal hour with the same shouts of joy as little people at home. The boys will climb a tree perhaps, with the more glee if the teacher's prohibition has added a whiff of danger to the exploit. Or they will chase an unfortunate goat around; though the goat, having been handled from earliest kidhood very much as we handle pet dogs, probably enjoys the sport as much as the boys do. A couple of boys may get astride a young bullock, and go careering along the road; or more likely the whole troop will make a rush for the nearest water in river or lake, and with terrific noise splash about in joyous excitement. No doubt those who are utterly unclad look with envy on the scraps of clothing worn by their more fortunate fellows, but that does not silence the shout of glee which fills the air as boys and girls are let loose 857

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notwithstanding the accident, accepted the inevitable, and were ferried safely across.

For the rest, the variety of woodwork includes carved walking-sticks, with straight, knobbed, or bent handles; chairs, stools, pillows, musical instruments, and wooden platters. In the Bundali district remarkably good Rurkee chairs are made on the European pattern, with perfectly smoothed spars, and perfectly burned-out holes for fitting the parts together. The one in my possession might quite well have been made in a carpenter's shop, but the only tools used were an axe and a knife, and a piece of iron for boring the holes. Toothed hair ornaments and small wooden dolls represent the finer work; and bamboo cups are decorated with pleasing patterns in poker work.

More important than the woodwork is the ancient craft of the potter. There is, of course, no potter's wheel, everything, from the immense pots, three feet high, down to the smallest eating dish, being formed by hand, built up, as regards the larger ones, by successive layers of clay, and finally hardened, after drying in the sun, by being put on a fire, while another fire is kindled inside. There is a great variety of pots, both in shape and in size. The very large ones are used for storing grain or flour; and some Europeans employ them for storing water. A well-stocked house will have up to twenty pots, for water carrying, for cooking porridge, fish, beans, flesh; and special ones are kept for beer making and drinking. The best clay is found at the north end of the lake, and from there

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the committee, contained no less than eighty-one items. I asked the committee to reduce it by at least a half, but after earnest wrestling with the problem, they returned and said that I must do the reduction myself. By the simple method of drawing my pencil through every second item, I reduced the programme to forty-one, but I did it to the mournful head-shakings of the committee. The performance was a mixture of native songs, games, dances, and Christian hymns, and dragged its weary length far into the afternoon. But there was compensation. Eight or ten boys of about ten years old came on to the platform, and gave a "show" of a European doctor examining people for signs of sleeping sickness, regarding which there was a great scare at the time. The little fellow who acted the doctor was nothing less than an imitative genius, the kick with which he finally dismissed the examinees being done "to the life," and it never failed to raise uproarious laughter in the great audience.

Of purely native games and amusements the number is legion.

Ingongwe is the large purple lump at the end of a growing bunch of bananas. It is rolled on the ground and pursued by yelling boys, armed with pointed sticks, each jabbing at it as it rolls, until one lifts it triumphantly on his stick.

Ihimbewegwa. Two pounding sticks are laid parallel to each other. One boy holds a third across, lifting and lowering it rhythmically, while another tries to hold it down by putting his foot on it. If he

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534 fails, the moving pounding stick comes down upon his foot, which is held between the two parallel ones.

Ikyula, the frog. Two sides at a small distance from each advance to meet, hopping like frogs, and, circling round each other, return to their places. Any who fail through exhaustion are the captives of the other side, and the game goes on until one side is captured, or all are tired out.

Eya kalenda. Children form a ring, with one in the middle. All bend forward, hands on knees, and move round in a shuffling manner in a circle. The one in the middle acts as leader; if he turns to the right the others do the same; if to the left they follow suit. The leader sings "*eya kalenda*," and the others respond with "*nyama we*." After a little the leader claps hands over his head, the others following and singing the while.

"*Turwe na Balemba*": let us fight the Abemba. Two rows of boys kneel facing each other, hands on ground, heads down; all sing "*Turwe na Balemba*" twice, beating the ground with their hands. At the second singing one side advances on hands and knees, growling, to drive back the enemy; then the other side advances to fight the first, and so on.

Pamba mililí is not unlike "See the robbers passing by" or "Oranges and Lemons." Two of the tallest children stand facing each other, hands raised and meeting to form an arch, a gentle clapping being kept up all the time. The others form in line according to height, and sing "*E! yuka mililí*"; the two forming the arch respond with "*Pamba mililí*."

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Then the line advances and passes under the arch singing. The last to pass through is usually held, but sometimes escapes. 524

Of such games there is almost no end, and new ones are continually being invented, many of them imitative of something introduced by the white man, European peculiarities being specially liable to this hilarious form of flattery. I have seen boys imitate the peculiar walk of Europeans, to the intense joy of the onlookers. For, let it be repeated, to the younger generation the white man is no longer a little tin god, or any other kind of god. He is fully respected for all that the native considers worthy of respect (and their ideas do not always harmonize with ours), but if he is laughable for any reason, he need not doubt that he is laughed at. 524 177 522

Dancing is the principal relaxation of the Konde, if the violent exercise which it sometimes involves may be called relaxation. It is indulged in with great zest, and, as the night advances, with complete abandon, moral and physical. There is not much that can be called religious dancing: a children's rain dance, a pestilence dance, and the wild leaping and shouting, with horn and drum, which young and old engage in at times of eclipse or earthquake. But anything may be made the occasion of an impromptu dance: the arrival of a European, especially if he is popular; the killing of lion or leopard; the killing of much game by a European; the return of friends from a journey; or a score of other reasons, some of them trivial, such as the laying down of a load which 535

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535 *Hikwera.* This a highly objectionable dance, better not too minutely described. There are four drums and uproarious singing and shouting. The dance is of recent introduction among the Konde, and is held late at night. The chiefs try to put it down, but without much success; and there are other very evil dances, which no decent people will have anything to do with. Such dances usually come like an epidemic, spread rapidly over a whole district, and lead to great moral injury, until they are put down by vigorous chiefs, or die out of themselves, until the epidemic comes round again. Very frequently these evil performances go on the whole night, with terrific noise, and so determined are the dancers, that respectable people are afraid to interfere, lest an unmerciful handling should send them back to their homes bruised and bleeding. But the approach of a white man sends the dancers rushing off to hide in the bush, as I have often found at all hours of the night.

529 Of games of skill the most important is a kind of draughts game, an Arab introduction. Thirty-six holes are made in the ground; the players, two or four in number, have small stones which they move from hole to hole, until one side is declared winner. I do not understand the game, and shall not attempt to describe it; but a very complete description is given in "The Ila-speaking Peoples," by Smith and Dale.

538 A favourite intellectual exercise is the propounding of riddles, of which there is a large stock, and new